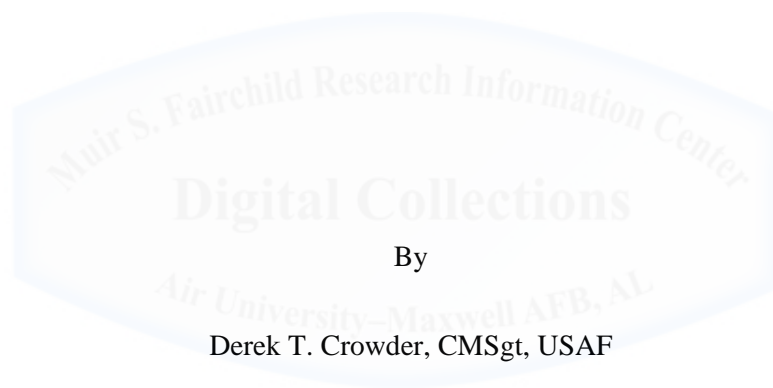AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

ASSESSMENT OF USAF'S CIVILIAN HIRING PROCESS AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT IT HAS

ON OUR ABILITY TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN A MILLENNIAL WORKFORCE IN AN EFFORT

TO REPLENISH AN AGING CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

By

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Biography

Chief Master Sergeant Derek T. Crowder is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. Before coming to Air War College, CMSgt Crowder was the Superintendent of the Mission Support Group, 375 Mission Support Group, Scott Air Force Base, IL where he advises the commander on operational and readiness initiatives impacting the group's 1,500 personnel assigned to five squadrons.

Chief Crowder holds a Master of Arts degree from Wayland Baptist University in Human Resources Management. He joined the United States Air Force in 1994 as a Materiel Management Apprentice and held several management and technical positions within the career field. These include, positions within the Logistics Readiness Squadron, Supply Chain Management Group, and as a Major Command Functional Manager for Air Mobility Command where he was responsible for the organization, training, and education of over 1300 materiel managers throughout 22 operating locations. He also served in an Air Force Special Duty assignment as a Professional Military Education Instructor for Airman Leadership School.

Abstract

With many Air Force civil servants eligible to retire within the next ten to fifteen years it is important we ensure our civilian hiring practices do not negatively impact the Air Force's ability to recruit and retain Millennials to replenish our aging civilian work force. Millennials are those born between 1981 and 1999 and make up over 23 percent of the population and our critical to the success of civil service. Understanding who millennials are, what they desire for employment should be a focus area for federal employers. The USAF has implemented significant changes through the use of the end-to-end hiring initiative of 2011, however, there are four additional areas the federal government should also address. These changes are: 1. significant investment in recruiting opportunities for civilian hires, 2. increase development opportunities, 3. a robust feedback process during the orientation process, and 4. increase manpower to meet or decrease the 80-day timeframe. Including these changes as well as the initiatives from the 2011 end-to-end hiring initiative will increase the ability to recruit and retain millennials for civil service.

Introduction

With many Air Force civil servants eligible to retire within the next ten to fifteen years it is important we ensure our civilian hiring practices do not negatively impact the Air Force's ability to recruit and retain Millennials to replenish our aging civilian work force. There are debates within society of the exact range of birth dates of Millennials. For the purpose of this paper they are classified as those born between 1981 and 1999. Roughly seventy-six million millennials make up over twenty-three percent of the population of the United States yet currently only sixteen percent of the Federal workforce are represented by this population.[1] As millennials enter the workforce we must understand the impact these individuals and the talents they possess have on the future of civil service.

To understand the impact recruiting and retaining millennials has on replenishing our aging workforce, we must first understand who millennials are and how we can unlock their potential. Millennials have different desires for jobs than other generations and we need to ensure our current hiring practices and organizational structure embraces these desires. For example, millennials grew up as a generation with constant access to information, and seek to be employed by organizations who encourage the use of technology in the workplace. The government has been a leader in technology for years in the past, but how do millennials view the government as a leader in technology compared to other companies in the private sector?

In order to stay competitive we must ensure our hiring practices foster an environment millennials desire when seeking employment. Understanding how our recruiting and retention practices impact millennials is important to our success in replacing an aging civil service workforce. This research paper addresses the question of whether the United States Air Force's current hiring practices negatively impact the ability to recruit and retain the millennial generation who are critical to replace an aging civil service workforce.

Thesis

With over 50 percent of our civil service population retirement eligible within the next ten years it is important the Air Force not wait to incorporate more aggressive recruiting practices to entice millennials to government service. Waiting, could potentially leave a rather large gap to fill if we do not smartly recruit and retain millennials to replace our aging workforce.

Why recruiting and retaining millennials is important for our future as a service:

To fully understand why recruiting and retaining millennials is important to the future of our workforce we first must understand, who the millennials are, how they differ from other generations and what value they bring to civil service. Although the timeframe of millennial birth years differs depending on the source, for the purpose of this paper, millennials are classified as those born between 1981 and 1999. A comparison of generations is listed in table 1 below.[2]

	Baby Boomers	Gen X'ers	Millennials
Length of Generation	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-1999
Population Size	90 Million	46 Million	76 Million

Table 1: Generations Defined

The table above shows the number of workforce eligible members within each category based on when they were born. This chart shows a majority of the U.S. population is made up primarily of those members from Generation X and Baby Boomer generations who are nearing retirement age. As the younger members of Baby Boomers and older members of Generation X begin to transition from the workforce into retirement we have the potential to be left with a gap the millennial generation will have to fill. Millennials are considered the rising class of workers, projected to make up over 46% of the US workforce by 2020.[3] Air Force demographics from 2016 show the average age of Air Force civil servant as 47.9 years old, with an average length of service of 14.5 years. This is a concern because Table 2, shows over half of the Air Force civilian workforce will be retirement eligible over the next 6-10 years.

	Percentage	# Employees
6-10 Years	19.2	27,017
1-5 Years	18.4	25,892
0-5 Years ago	10.9	15,338
5 Years ago or more	2.7	2,788
Total Eligible	51.2	71,035
Total Employees		140,718

Table 2: Retirement Eligibility

With over 50 percent of our civil service population retirement eligible within the next ten years it is important the Air Force not wait to incorporate more aggressive recruiting practices to entice millennials to government service. Waiting could potentially leave a rather large gap to fill if we do not smartly recruit and retain millennials to replace our aging workforce.

Members of the millennial generation grew up in a different environment than previous generations. They were raised by high-communication, participation-oriented parents, otherwise known as "helicopter parents."[4] Because of these types of parents, most millennials have been sheltered since birth, with constant concern of self-image and continual reminders of how "special" they are.[5] When participating in recreational sports, they were overly praised throughout their developmental years leading to the receipt of awards and trophies for just being a part of the team.[6] All generations are influenced by people, places and things that define who they are. The baby boomers were influenced by individuals such as: Martin Luther King, Jr., President John F. Kennedy, whereas the millennials had Barney and Britney Spears. Baby boomers were influenced by historical places and events such as, Hanoi, and Woodstock, whereas millennials were influenced by domestic terrorist events such as Columbine High School and the Oklahoma City bombing. In comparison to Generation X'ers, who saw technology inventions of the microwave and cable television, millennials saw an increase in information overload through the invention of smartphones.[7]

There are many stereotypes surrounding millennials such as being labeled the privileged generation with the tendency to bore easily.[8] It is important to understand the value of embracing these characteristics in order to appeal to the next generation. Millennials have many talents advantageous to government service. Even prior to entering the workforce after college, millennials are considered to be extremely experienced.[9] Millennials are skilled in multi-tasking and seek to live a lifestyle of always on the go. Growing up, many held summer jobs, spent time tutoring other students, participated in school clubs or sports activities.[10] They believe they can make a difference in the world and spend time volunteering for different organizations. All of these may seem trivial; however, with these activities

come opportunities for leadership, increased knowledge in problem-solving, social skills and the good work ethic employers want from their employees.[11]

As the first generation where media platforms have been most influential, it is common for millennials to understand and use technology to a far greater extent than previous generations. They are skilled with multiple platforms for information sharing. They desire constant access to information and want it instantaneously in the forms of social media. On average, millennials switch attention between social media platforms such as laptops, phones, tablets, 27 times per hour, in comparison to 17 times for previous generations.[12] This can be positive for any company a millennial works for since they are tapped in to a unique demographic that makes up over 23% of the population, other millennials. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, serve as a conduit for millennials to share information with thousands of people. This enables millennials to share with other, the work they are doing, the environment they work in, and share general knowledge about the industry they are in. This has the potential to spark interest of others within their friendship circle. When using social media, 91% of millennial use the check-in option to let other users know their location and 61% of millennials look up stores and locations after viewing a check-in of someone on Facebook.[13] Since social media is a constant factor in the lives of many millennials we must tap into this new diverse way of looking at life.

Millennials are a very diverse generation, more diverse than previous generations entering the workforce not just in demographics but their overall outlook on life. They excel at their jobs when they know they are part of something worthwhile, and recognize the power of individual differences and the difference each individual can make.[14] When millennials began to enter the workforce, the US was experiencing a recession and despite growing up with the "me" reputation, surprisingly, money is not a motivator for many millennials and employment.[15] They have a strong desire for something bigger than themselves, personal relationships, and doing whatever feels comfortable.[16] Table 3 depicts what is most important to millennials according to a survey conducted by Pew Research institute in 2010.[17]

Millennials' Priorities	% of Importance	Millennials' Priorities	% of Importance
Being a good parent	52	Religion	15
Successful Marriage	30	High-Paying Career	15
Helping Others	21	Lots of Free-Time	9
Owning a Home	20	Becoming Famous	1

Table 3: Millennial Priorities

Because they have not experienced racial and gender biases compared to the level of previous generations, they are more tolerant of alternative lifestyles and mixed families.[18] They expect and welcome a diverse environment, one where everyone is appreciated regardless of their background. Acceptance of everyone can lead to collaboration in problem-solving in an environment where they feel safe in expressing ideas and opinions, areas they thrive in when they know they are part of something worthwhile.[19]

Millennials have a constant desire to learn and grow. In a study by *Forbes Magazine,* 65% said "the opportunity for personal development was the most influential factor in their current job."[20] Their desire to learn and lack of tolerance for boredom leads millennials to constantly seek opportunities to grow throughout their careers.[21] They view their relationship with their manager as more casual and one built with a strong foundation of mentoring over supervision.[22] Millennials typically are flexible because they tend to start families after their careers are established. They are not tied down with a mortgage, so this can lead to opportunities for promotions to different locations even those with a quick turn time. The opportunity to work abroad is popular for millennials, with 71% approving of working abroad at a moment's notice.[23] Their lack of dependents requiring attention can be beneficial to employers. They are able to stay plugged in at work, work around the clock and travel anywhere on short notice for company business.[24]

What Millennials desire for employment

With many popular cultural stereotypes surrounding the millennial generation, we must gain an understanding of actual millennial desires for work and life environments and strive to move past the stereotypes to maximize our gains from millennial employment. Millennials are identified as a generation motivated by having fun, being socially interactive, developing personally, and continuously training to gain the most fulfillment from their work environment.[25] These traits differ from motivating factors from previous generations of: social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs.[26] So what factors do millennials value in the workplace? In 2011 by Price Waterhouse Coopers surveyed 4,364 recent graduates under the age of 31 across 75 countries regarding choices. The results of this survey are summarized in tables 4, 5, and 6. Table 4 identifies the top ten factors making organizations attractive to millennials.[27]

1	Opportunities for career progression
2	Competitive wages/other financial incentives
3	Excellent training/development programs
4	Good benefit packages
5	Flexible working arrangements
6	International opportunities
7	Good reputation for ethical practices
8	Corporate values that match their own
9	A reputation as an employer of the best and brightest people
10	Employer brand

Table 4: Factors Making an Organization an Attractive Employer

Table 5 however, identifies factors that most influenced millennials decision to accept their current job offer.[28]

1	Opportunity for personal development
2	Reputation of the organization
3	Role itself
4	Starting salary/rate of pay
5	Working location
6	Sector in which organization operates
7	Long term potential for financial rewards
8	Need to get job quickly
9	Potential to make a difference
10	Working hours/annual leave

Table 5: Factors Most Influenced Decision to Accept Current Job

The differences between characteristics millennials view as an attractive employer and what most influenced their decision to accept their current job in this survey is directly related to a recession during the time they entered the workforce.[29] Results of these compromises are listed in table 6 below.[30]

1	Taking a lower salary than expected
2	Working away from preferred location
3	Fewer additional benefits
4	Working outside preferred sector
5	Limited opportunities for advancement
6	Working outside preferred role
7	Working for an organization not my first choice
8	Over qualified for job

Table 6: Compromises Made When Accepting Current Position

The concern for employers is, if millennials compromised to accept their current position during a recession, will they depart for greater opportunities as the economy begins to rise? To retain millennials, it is important for employers to meet needs and desires when it comes to the work environment. One graduate employee stated, "My career will be one of choice, not one chosen out of desperation. It will align who I am with what I do."[31] Another graduate, an employee with an overseas company, stated. "In this day and age, you have to be flexible and you cannot rely on working for the same employer for many years." These statements point to millennials having a "what's in it for me" mentality when it comes to employment. Millennials display loyalty to their employer as long as it suits their needs. Only a small

percentage will remain with their current company, with over 54% stating they believe they will have between two and five jobs over their careers.[32] Table 7 reflects percentages as well as numbers of jobs millennials believe they will hold during a career.

Number of Jobs	Percentage of Millennials
1	4%
Up to 5	54%
Up to 9	16%
10 or More	9%
Self-Employed	3%
Don't Know	14%

Table 7: Number of Employers over Career

As we strive to retain millennials, it is important to understand their desires when working within a company in hope to avoid them seeking employment elsewhere for better opportunities. Stated results of desires can vary depending on the survey. Another survey of millennial desires was conducted by The Center for Generational Kinetics from over 3,000 companies, representing over 200,000 employees, ranging in age between 19 and 37. Results were broken down into three subcategories: top five drivers of millennial employee engagement, four statements that separate the best millennial employers from everyone else, and how long millennials plan to stay at a job.[33] Tables 8 and 9 reflect results for the top five drivers as well as statements separating best millennial employers from everyone else.

1	Feel valued in organization
2	Confidence in leadership
3	Enjoy type of work
4	Feeling of daily progress
5	Organization treats me like a person

Table 8: Top Five Drivers

1	Feeling of value
2	Freedom to express opinions
3	Consideration for promotions
4	Fair pay for work performed

Table 9: Statements Separating Best Employees from Everyone Else

As you compare the results of these two categories with previous survey results you can see there are quite a few differences in opinion on what millennials desire from employees. There are however, similarities we can draw from to ensure we meet these desires. Although the difference between pay for performance versus overall salary is important, we can conclude pay is important to millennials regardless of who conducted the survey. Progress at work and the role played at work can also be seen as a similarity. When millennials feel they are performing important work, this could potentially lead millennials to be more willing to stay with a company who satisfies this desire. Regardless of the survey, there are many desires millennials have from their company on which employers must try to capitalize. Deborah Henretta, Group President for Asia & Global Specialty Channel, Proctor & Gamble stated, "The workplace and workforce are going to change dramatically as we look forward. The entire concept of work is going to become more flexible."[34] The environment is constantly changing and companies should consider the desires of millennials if they want to succeed as an organization. However, equally important is to know what employers can do to meet these desires to unlock millennial potential. The following paragraphs provide specific examples to help unlock millennial potential by offering suggestions on how to better meet these desires.

Employers must provide specific examples of standards. The Barnum study states millennials prefer a more relaxed style of dress standards, providing visual examples of acceptable behavior rather than leaving it open for interpretation. The definition of business casual can mean different things to Gen X'ers compared to millennials.[35] A priority for millennials is the opportunity for professional development. One way to facilitate this desire would be to create safe spaces within the organization for millennials to learn from leaders of different areas within the organization. Companies can invite emerging talent to participate in meetings with key leaders throughout the organizations. Millennials can view this as more important than a pay raise.[36] Companies should take advantage of open dialogue between millennials and senior leaders even if only during informal luncheons. Millennials want the opportunity to prove themselves by performing work they feel is significant. Allowing them time

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throughout the week to work on a special project identified by the millennial is suggested for them to prove their potential and value within the company.[37] To meet the desire of feeling valued is to make their first day unforgettable. Barnum Company does something a little unorthodox for new employees on their first day. They place all new employees on a pedestal with the company logo as a backdrop and take a picture with the millennials phone so they have instant access to information and can post it to different social media sites instantly if they choose to.[38] With millennials being a tech-savvy generation, this is extremely popular within the Barnum Company. Showing millennials the value your company has for their vision and talents can be accomplished by having them identify areas they want to grow within the company and work to provide additional training in this area even when assigned elsewhere.[39] As a bonus idea, to capitalize on millennial desire to be appreciated, Barnum suggests providing a paid vacation day on their birthday, suggesting millennials often view their birthday as a national holiday.[40]

Another study conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers offers a few suggestions for employers to bridge the gap between Gen X managers and millennials. The first suggestion, simply understand this generation. Companies should use metrics and surveys to capture and segment workforce's desires by generations to help employees understand the differences.[41] Getting the conditions of employment correct should be a focus for employers. Understanding what is being offered and what is expected in return should lay the foundation of reality versus perception. Awards, time off, benefits, potential promotions and other promises should be clearly communicated to ensure there is no confusion once employment begins.[42] Rotational assignments can also be utilized to help millennials grow. This can provide them with a sense of moving towards something within the company as well as provide them with different experiences to help eliminate boredom.[43] Providing consistent feedback either formally or informally can be beneficial for millennials. Stemming from their upbringing of constantly being told how great they are, they desire to know how they are doing much more often than those of previous generations.[44] A suggestion more difficult for traditional companies, is to provide flexibility in work performance as well as work schedules PWC suggests, "Set deadlines and if they meet them, don't

worry so much about their tactics and the time they clock in and out."[45] Promotions can help retain

millennials rather than them leaving and looking for advancement opportunities within other companies.

Allowing faster opportunities for advancement reduces frustrations with the amount of time it takes to

climb the career ladder based on antiquated methods of seniority.[46] Suggestions mentioned above may or

may not keep millennials from leaving a company for the next best thing, companies should be prepared

for millennials to leave. Having this built into your plan is a necessity.

This section provided desires for millennials as well as suggested ways to appeal to millennials.

One important consideration previously mentioned but not discussed yet in depth is how millennials place

importance on "brand" of companies. So how do millennials view the brand of the United States

Government?

Millennials view of government employment

Does working for the government appeal to the millennial generation? A study conducted by the

nonprofit Partnership for Public Service shows the number of millennials under the age of 30 working in

government is the lowest it has been since 2005.[47] This study discovered millennials, once they get a job

with federal service "believe their career development is shifted to a slow track, with minimal recognition

from their bosses, shrinking opportunities for training and few assignments that really harness their

talent.[48] These issues pose a serious problem for the federal government. If we want to recruit and retain

millennials for civil service we need to make sure we meet their desires for employment. Table 10

reflects the number of millennials exiting the workforce from FY2010 through FY2014.[49]

Age	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014
20-24	31,161	30,228	26,044	19,830	16,444
25-29	26,309	27,867	27,352	26,502	11,189
30-34	19,493	22,076	22,759	24,012	24,339

Table 10: Separations from federal civilian workforce

Although the number departing federal service from 2010 through 2014 for ages 20-24 and 25-29 has decreased and reflects positive change for civil service, the real concern should be the increase in those age 30-34 departing after gaining experience.

Public opinion matters to millennials as well. PWC asked millennials, "Are there any sectors in which you would not wish to work solely because of their image?" Defense ranked second, with over 12 percent of the vote. So what causes this opinion? "The barrage of negative news stories, the attacks by politicians, the seeming dysfunction in a number of agencies, clearly undermine the millennials' desire to go into government as well as parents' notions that it's a good thing to do."[50] Trust of the government is another factor to consider. A Rand corporation study comprised of results from the Harvard Institute of Politics reflects the percentage of Millennials who trust the below institutions as shown in table 11.[51]

Organization	Percentage
US Military	47%
Local Government	33%
President	32%
Federal Government	20%
Congress	14%

Table 11: Millennials Trust in Organizations

Sequestration and budget cuts have also been a factor for millennials seeking employment with the government. The impact on hiring new employees has curtailed millennials desires to join civil service. A slow hiring pipeline competing with private sectors forces millennials to take jobs outside of the government where they have an increased chance of advancement. Those who wait out our slow, antiquated system often find themselves competing with older more experienced individuals, often military veterans who receive preferential hiring even for entry level positions.[52] Time and the desire to feel wanted is also of importance to millennials and currently our slow process to hire individuals is unacceptable in comparison to the civilian sector.[53] A 34 year old government contractor believes a lack of training is an issue with government employment, stating, "The government undertrains its employees, and contractors are even worse because companies do not have extra funds for training".[54] Millennial

attraction to "neck-tie billionaires" in Silicon Valley and their drive to do something independently different cause them to see the government as an organization that stifles creativity for new ideas. Eric Gillespie, founder, CEO and director of Govini in Arlington Virginia identifies the following as one of the reasons for low interest in government employment of millennials, "In government, the best idea doesn't always win. Relationships, tenure and structure are prized over innovation."[55]

Although millennials find serving others as an attractive way of life, many find the sea of red tape as constrictive to their style and find themselves looking for a career change sooner than later. Our structure of a stable career ladder appeals but can lead to dissatisfaction when faced with the government's preference of promoting seniority over performance and when "bureaucracy gets in the way, they choose to leave."[56] The lack of the use of social media can also force millennials to lose interest. Since it is vastly important to their daily lives they can quickly feel disconnected if not permitted to participate in social media as is the case with some civil service employment opportunities.[57] Being at the tip of the spear is what millennials want and a company that thrives on innovation can attract millennials for employment. In a survey by Deloitte, 67 percent of 3,200 millennials said, "reputation for innovation and creativity played a role in where they looked for jobs", however, government employees participating in this survey rated the government 14 percent lower than employees form the private sector.[58] The view of government as well as our process is important if we want to attract the next generation of talent, understanding the process is for recruiting and retaining millennials is critical to our success.

The Civil Service Process of hiring and recruiting employees

In 2008, the Office of Personnel Management and the Chief Human Capital Officers Council Subcommittee created a partnership[59] because applicants often reported confusion about "differences throughout the different agencies in terms of the application processes, complex application requirements often difficult to meet, and lack of communications from the agencies as to the different hiring process and applicant status."[60] Combined frustrations by potential employees make it difficult for the Federal

Government to compete with the private sector in hiring qualified candidates. Previous attempts to address hiring processes failed due to taking a stovepipe approach looking at component by component to improve the process instead of looking at it from a holistic approach. OPM took a comprehensive and integrated approach to transform the process for applicants, managers and HR professionals.[61] In 2011, the Director of the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Mr. John Berry recognized there was an issue with the process of civilian hiring, "We can't afford to take a hundred days to fill a vacancy. Our goal is to hire the best people for the job, but those talented people are not going to wait forever; they will accept a position somewhere else and we will have lost the opportunity."[62] The result was the End to End (E2E) roadmap. There are four initiatives within the E2E process: Streamlined job opportunity announcements, centralized repository of qualified applicants, Senior Executive Service pilot, and End-to-End Hiring initiative. Although there are four initiatives within the E2E, the primary OPM focus was on the hiring initiative and will be the further focus of this paper.

The E2E initiative focuses on five components: workforce planning, recruitment, the hiring process, security and stability and finally orientation. We will look at components of each one separately. The first component, workforce planning, is the, "Process for identifying the human resources required to meet agency's mission and goals and developing strategies to meet these requirements."[63] This includes: number of employees, required skills, and actions needed to attract, develop and retain employees.[64] Recruitment, the second component, was primarily conducted only when an opening occurred is now viewed as an-going process and conducted even when we are not actively looking for employees. AF recruiting will be discussed later in this point. The hiring process is the third component of the roadmap. Things that drive this are attracting and evaluating candidates while considering the merit systems as well as veteran's preference. Security and stability is the fourth component and is an assessment of applicant's character and conduct through a security clearance to "protect the integrity and promote the efficiency of Federal service."[65] The final component is orientation and integrating the new employee in the organization.[66] The methodology of the E2E roadmap, "Focused on competitive hiring for applicants

from outside the Federal Government" and is designed to be accomplished in 80 days.[67] Illustration 1 further depicts the timeline for the hiring process.[68]

Hiring Process (Applicant - 70 calendar days / Manager - 80 calendar days)

Validate Need (1 Day) | Request Personnel Action (1 Day) | Review / update Position Description (1 Day) | Confirm Job Analysis and Assessment Develop Strategy (5 Days) | Create and Post Job Opportunity Announcement including Career Patterns (2 Days) | Receive Applications & Notify Applicants (10 Days) | Close Job Opportunity Announcement | Evaluate Applications (15 Days) | Issue Cert / Notify Applicants (1 Day) | Selecting Official: Review Applications / Conduct Interviews / Check References / Select / Return Certificate (15 Days) | Tentative Job Offer / Acceptance (3 Days) | Initiate Security Check (10 Days) | Official Offer / Acceptance (2 Days) | Entry on Duty (14 Days)

Illustration 1: The E2E Hiring Process

This E2E initiative was first established in 2008 to make the process smoother for applicants, especially those external to federal service. However, it could be argued, years later there still is an issue with the process. Corliss Jackson, a former GS-15 manager for the Office of Personnel Management recognized an issue after this initiative and in 2015 began providing "Cracking the Code to the Federal Hiring Process", an informational seminar on the process throughout the National Capital Region to help transitioning Veterans understand the process.[69] As we look at metrics in illustration 2 and 3 from the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph AFB, TX for July through September 2016 we can see there are still some concerns about the length as we barely meet the timeline for internal and external clearly exceeds.[70]
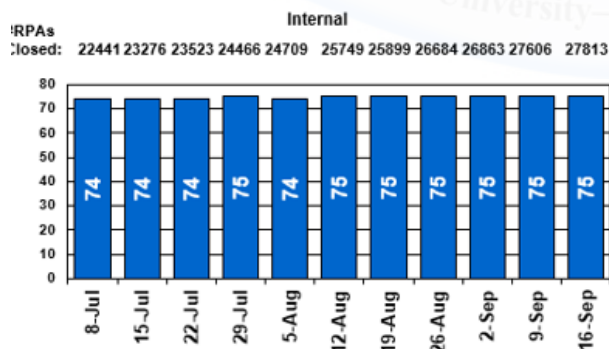

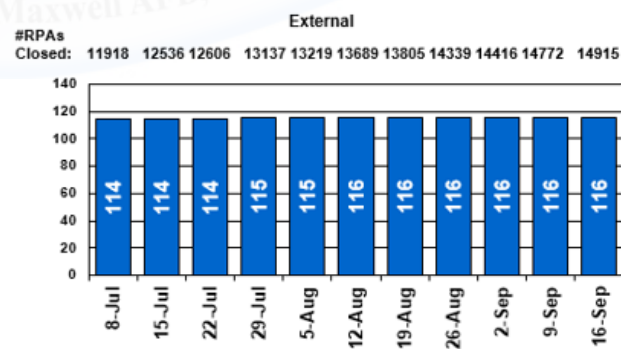Illustration 2: Internal Hire Timeframe   Illustration 3: External Hire Timeframe

As mentioned previously, E2E recruitment has changed to an initiative conducted not just when a vacancy occurs but also when federal employers are not seeking to fill positions. We must ensure we are not passive in our recruitment strategies and by definition, posting a job opportunity is passive and cannot be substituted for focused recruiting strategies.[71] An effective recruitment strategy within the E2E hiring

process incorporates different elements and tasks. First, create a recognized brand name or household name for your company and create recruiting materials reflecting your brand.[72] Second, select and train a recruiting team using things such as "train the trainer" materials as well as teaching them to identify and build relationships with professional organizations.[73] Third, develop a marketing strategy focused on realistic job previews, streamlined job opportunity announcements, and the use of job posting websites.[74]

The AF currently focuses on a few strategies for recruiting civil servants. We use human resources professionals as field recruiters who seek talent within their particular region.[75] For some identified career fields these field recruiters have the authority to offer individuals jobs right on the spot. However, these opportunities primarily focus on those with special skills, such as: Physicians, cyber specialists, and engineers.[76] Also, newsletters are sent to over 400 college campuses throughout the United States offering different opportunities for employment. One area we do not focus on is that of marketing or advertising. We have commercials for members to join the Air Force as blue suiters, isn't it about time we start placing ads for those to serve wearing a different uniform? Of course with anything there are challenges to recruiting. Things such as: resource constraints, talent shortages in the job market, shortage of human resource professionals to serve as recruiters, as well as technology is not always used effectively. Having a solid process that appeals to millennials is important, however, equally important is what we offer as part of our recruitment package.

The current process for applying for a position within civil service is through USAJOBS and Student jobs.gov. USAJOBS is central repository for vacancy announcements and other relevant employment information available to applicants 24/7 and is available through two delivery systems, the website as well as an interactive voice response system.[77] These systems allow applicants to search jobs by location, agency, and through a keyword search. Some important information potential applicants can find through these sources are the flexibilities the Federal government offers when it comes to employment. For example, flexible pay, opportunities for recruitment and relocation incentives for newly appointed employees or those currently serving who agree to take a position in a geographic area.[78] The

government also offers flexible hiring such as, opportunities for employment through the Federal Career

Intern Program for those entering as GS-5, 7, or 9.[79] Many other benefits such as flexible work schedule,

commonly referred to as "alternative work schedule," flexible leave programs, telework, student loan

repayment plan and thrift savings plan matching can also be found through these sources. Illustration 4

identifies flexibility of employment by time in career.[80]

– High Impact HR Flexibilities Mapped to Career Pattern Scenarios –

Flexibility or Authority	HR Flexibilities and Authorities Handbook*	Student	New Professional	Mid-Career	Retiree	Highly Mobile	Revolving	Term	Mission-Focused	Experienced Professional	Requires Flexibilities
Pay											
Recruitment or Relocation Incentives[1]	E-1&2		H	H	M	H	H		H	H	
Superior Quals & Special Needs Pay-Setting Auth.	E-4		M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	
Maximum Payable Rate Rule[2]	E-5				H		M		H	H	
Dual Comp Waivers	E-6				H						
Hiring											
Temporary Appointment	A-3						M				
Term Appointment	A-3		H				H	H			
Excepted Appointing Authorities[3]	A-4	H	H	H						M	
Veterans Appointing Authorities	A-4	H	M	M		M			H	M	
Appointment of Experts and Consultants	A-4			H	H	M	H		H		
Direct-Hire Authority	A-4		M	M				M	H		
Reinstatement Eligibility	A-4				H	H	H	M			
Intergov'tal Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program	J-3			M		H	H	H			
Work Arrangements											
Flexible Work Schedules and Leave Policies	C-1&3	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Part-Time and/or Job Sharing	A-4	H		M	H						H
Telework	C-2	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Benefits											
Flexible Spending Accounts	D-7		M	M		M	M	M	M	M	M
Student Loan Repayment Program	E-11	M	H			M			H		
Tuition Reimbursement	J-1	H	H					M	M		
Childcare and Eldercare Benefits	C-6		M	H	M					M	H
Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Matching	D-5		H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Part-Time/Term Benefits	Many	H			H			H			H

Illustration 4: Flexibility of employment timeline.

With the hiring process explained to include what the AF does for recruiting employees, how can we

ensure our practices appeal to members of the millennial generation?

Recommendations

After conducting research, the Air Force along with other federal agencies are providing many things

millennials desire for employment. For instance, we satisfy their desire for work-life balance by offering

things to many civil servants such as, the option to telework or a flex schedule. The government currently values the importance of the use of social media during the duty day by employees as evident in a change in policy over the years allowing the use of social media sites such as Facebook, you tube, etc…, therefore, satisfying the millennial desire to stay connected during working hours. With locations throughout the world and a very competitive pay scale for civil servants the government is currently satisfying the millennial desires of working location as well as a good starting salary/rate of pay. However, it is my view the implementation of the following recommendations would help appeal to millennials when it comes to joining civil service as well as remain in civil service and would help alleviate the burden of many of our current members approaching retirement age. The recommendations are results of research performed identifying areas the department of defense should consider highly important to those of the millennial generation. The department of defense is doing many things attractive to millennials, however, in order to remain competitive with the civil sector and a relevant employer the department of defense should focus on four recommendations when it comes to the hiring process as a whole.

First, in order to appeal to the tech-savvy millennial generation we should capitalize on their desire to have information at their fingertips at all times we should improve our antiquated system. Our current system of information via USAJOBS and the toll free number are systems of pull versus push. In other words, potential candidates are required to seek information from a website versus having it in their face during daily life via other social media methods. If we seek to hire millennials we must ensure we are able to reach those throughout the world when it comes to opportunities of employment. Although we live in a fiscally constrained environment, the Department of defense should invest money into the recruiting process to capitalize on those unfamiliar with federal service. In an environment where budget constraints limit spending, it is imperative we reach a larger candidate pool. In comparison to recruiting those in uniform we spend a significant amount of money on marketing to help this process through the use of posters, billboards and even television commercials and even recruiters utilizing twitter and

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Facebook and should capitalize on these methods to reach those who desire to serve in civilian status. Currently brochures are sent to over 400 schools throughout the nation, however, this does not achieve the desired outcome of reaching the masses as other social media platforms would. We also use regional recruiters for local campuses, however, their primary focus is on recruiting specialty or hard to fill career fields. By providing more field recruiters and broadening their scope, we would be able to attract millennials for all employment opportunities. If we as a government value those who serve wearing a civilian uniform as we do our uniformed members, then we need to invest in our future when it comes to recruiting.

Second, allow for more development opportunities for millennials to participate in. Since 65% of millennials rated "the opportunity for personal development as the most influential factor in their current job", the department of defense should capitalize on training and development opportunities to ensure millennials receive personal development.[81] In a fiscally constrained environment this can be difficult; however, providing opportunities to job share with others within and outside their particular department as well as those in leadership positions combined with rotational assignments can ensure we meet this desire as well as provide more well-rounded employees for future job openings. Job sharing allows individuals to be part of work teams, enabling them to learn multiple jobs within their organization versus being stove piped in one particular specialty. Currently the AF utilizes part-time/job sharing, however, this focuses more on splitting work and "time" between two employees and does not provide career development.

Third, provide robust feedback during the orientation process. The current process once hired is lengthy and does not provide constant feedback consistent with what millennials are used to. The current feedback requirement for civil service employees is mandated on a quarterly basis. This is inconsistent with millennials desires. They grew up receiving constant feedback and seek employment with employers who provide constant feedback in both formal and informal methods. The AF should consider mandating feedback both informal and formal on a more repetitive schedule. Feedback begins once the

employee begins working for the federal government during the orientation period. However, there are many gaps between our process and what millennials desire. For instance, the process is quite lengthy, with initial orientation lasting up to 365 days with mandatory touch points from the supervisor at the 7, 30, 90, 180, and 365 day marks to discuss various policies, job responsibilities, etc..… Millennials want to perform meaningful work and desire a supervisor who shows they care for them with constant praise and feedback. If we allow them to get bored then they potentially will decide civil service is not for them and look for something else even before we get them fully oriented with the unit. Providing meaningful feedback throughout the process as well as streamlining the orientation process may help keep millennial employees once we get them in the door. Due to the fact over 54% of millennials will have up to 5 job changes throughout their lives, it is important we match our process to their desires to minimize employee turnover.

Fourth, provide ample manpower to meet or decrease the 80-day timeframe. During the 4th quarter of FY16 the external hiring timeline exceeded the current standard on average by 35 days, this is unacceptable when trying to compete with the much faster civilian sector. During a phone conversation I had with the Air Force Personnel Center they led me to believe the issue is there are too many applicants as well as touch points within the process and the number of employees responsible for the civilian hiring process is simply inadequate in numbers. Ensuring adequate manpower is available to process requests both within local civilian personnel offices as well as Air Force Personnel Center could be the difference in bringing in millennial employees who otherwise may take a job with a civilian company vice waiting on the bureaucracy of government employment.

Conclusion

With many of our Air Force civil servants eligible to retire within the next ten to fifteen years it is important as an Air Force we ensure our civilian hiring practices do not negatively impact our ability to recruit and retain Millennials to replenish our aging civilian work force. Understanding who millennials are is important as we look to replace our aging workforce. Millennials have different desires for jobs

than previous generations and we need to ensure our current hiring practices and organizational structure embraces these desires.

The department of defense has done many things over the past few years such as the E2E hiring timeline to help streamline the process to appeal to millennials. However, there are additional considerations the department of defense must consider if they want to ensure we have the right mix of millennial employees for the future:

1. Update our recruiting practices and expenditures
2. More opportunities for personal development
3. More robust feedback and orientation process
4. Increase manpower to meet current timeline

These practices along with the current practices will make the department of defense more competitive in hiring millennials in comparison with civilian companies.
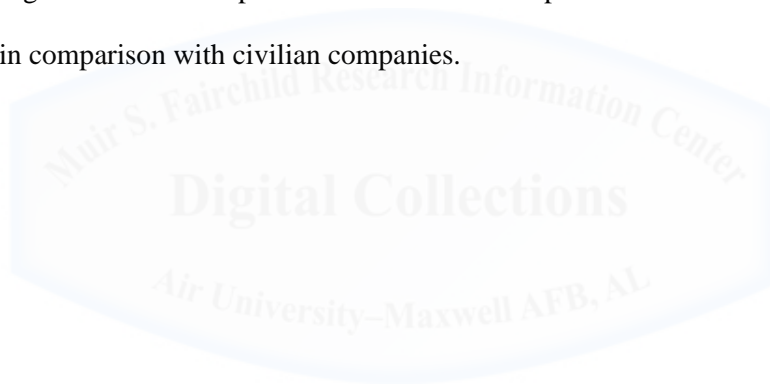
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